



BRIEFING MEMO

June 17, 2010

To: Sally Bagshaw, Chair
Parks and Seattle Center Committee (PASC)

From: Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent

Subject: Seattle Parks and Recreation presentation on 2010 Race and Social Justice Initiative Work Plans

For the past 6 years, Seattle Parks and Recreation has worked to end institutional racism and social inequity through our Race and Social Initiative Justice Change Team.

Despite the difficult financial environment, it heartens employees and managers alike that RSJI continues to be a priority for the City's elected officials. Eliminating race-based inequities in our city is difficult work, and requires long-term dedication. I thank you for your shared commitment, and look forward to your support as a critical component of our success.

Parks and Recreation has been working on RSJI since 2004. The attached table describes our major accomplishments thus far in 2010, as well as some of our challenges. Because of limited time, we won't be able to cover this information in detail, but will highlight the following:

- We are peers. Our Change Team has always been comprised of employees from every level of the organization; however, during team meetings, we are peers. This sustainable model has worked so well, that we have incorporated it into the implementation of our Strategic Action Plan, recognizing Race and Social Justice as a common theme in the plan and intentionally sharing leadership with Change Team members to provide a RSJ lens as we implement the plan.
- Activating our young people. The Seattle Green Partnership has provided opportunities for the department to better engage all our diverse citizens in environmental stewardship. It serves immigrant and refugee populations through curriculum design, and volunteer restoration projects. This fall and winter, Green Seattle Partnership engaged 841 K-12 students in 17 events that put 1,000 trees into parks citywide.
- Training our colleagues. Change team members have trained 858 full-time employees, or 78%, in "Race: The Power of Illusion" since 2007, building

capacity in our department. The challenges have been 1) using a highly decentralized staff to facilitate sessions, 2) getting facilitators trained, 3) meeting the needs of outside partners who also want to be trained, including the Park Board and Advisory Councils.

- Policy change. Using the Racial Equity Toolkit helps us strengthen policies, such as field scheduling. RSJ team members and field scheduling staff worked together to understand how to use the toolkit to identify inequities in our existing policy and we are in the process of amending the policy to be more inclusive. The challenge is to educate ourselves to see inequities in a system that we have used for years.
- Community engagement. As part of our increased outreach efforts we created a toolkit for conducting an analysis of stakeholders for our community centers, and created a mentoring team to train Community Center Coordinators in how to conduct such an analysis. Last year, we held 8 meetings with communities to gather information and feedback, and are continuing the process this year. One at Garfield was so successful it resulted in a second meeting with a group of seniors only.
- Healthy teens. Our healthy food and fitness program began with seniors and has expanded to other age groups. We are seeing a growing interest from at-risk teens in learning about vegetables and how to garden. In addition, they are moving beyond pizza, and are learning to cook with and appreciate good tasting vegetables.

I look forward to sharing our work, and strategizing with the Committee about how we can collectively work for racial and social equity.

Cc: Parks and Recreation Change Team
SOCR – Julie Nelson, Glenn Harris